

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SP-03 AID-20 EB-11 NSC-07 RSC-01

CIEP-02 TRSE-00 SS-20 STR-08 OMB-01 CEA-02 AGR-20

COME-00 SWF-02 L-03 PA-04 PRS-01 USIE-00 CIAE-00

INR-10 NSAE-00 INRE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USSS-00 SY-04

DRC-01 /141 W

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O R 041605Z JUN 74

FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7184

INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY GUAYAQUIL

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY PANAMA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY QUITO

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN JOSE 2108

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ETRD, CS, PFOR

SUBJECT: BANANAS -- PANAMANIAN AMBASSADOR CHARGES STANDARD
INVOLVED IN "GOLPE" PLOT.

REF: SAN JOSE 2030

1. LATE JUNE 3 PANAMANIAN AMBASSADOR DAVID PERE CALLED
A PRESS CONFERENCE TO SAY THAT A PLOT HAD BEEN DISCOVERED
FOR ASSASSINATING GENERAL TORRIJOS AND OVERTHROWING
THE GOVERNMENTS OF COSTA RICA AND HONDURAS.
PERE SAID THAT THE PLOT INVOLVED U.S. AND ENGLISH
MERCENARIES (VIETNAM VETERANS) AS WELL AS "PANAMANIAN
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TRAITORS" WHO HAD BEEN CONTRACTED BY STANDARD FRUIT.

THE PLAN WAS TO "TO SHOOT DOWN THE HELICOPTER OF GENERAL TORRIJOS BY 9MM MAGNUM MACHINE GUNS." PERE ADDED THAT ACCORDING TO HIS INFORMATION STANDARD FRUIT HAD PROPOSED THAT UNITED JOIN IN THE PLOT BUT THAT THE LATTER COMPANY HAD DECLINED.

2. PERE SAID THAT HE HAD INFORMED FOREIGN MINISTER FACIO AND THE AMBASSADOR OF HONDURAS AS SOON AS HE HAD RECEIVED THE INFORMATION AND THAT HE HAD ALSO TELEPHONED TORRIJOS WHO TOLD HIM HE HAD RECEIVED SIMILAR INFORMATION.

3. PERE REPORTEDLY ASCRIBED THE ALLEGED INVOLVEMENT OF STANDARD TO THAT COMPANY'S DISCONTENT WITH THE PROPOSED EXPORT TAX, NOTING THAT "THE POSITION OF GENERAL TORRIJOS ON THE TAX HAS BEEN FIRM AND PANAMA IS THE ONLY COUNTRY THAT HAS MADE THE TAX EFFECTIVE."

4. COMMENT: STANDARD MANAGER EGGLEHEART TELEPHONE CHARGE AT HOME THIS MORNING TO EMPHATICALLY DENY STORY AND TO EXPRESS HIS GRAVE CONCERN ABOUT POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES. HE SAID HE UNDERSTOOD PERE WOULD MEET WITH FACIO LATER TODAY "TO EXAMINE THE EVIDENCE," AND ASKED IF EMBOFF COULD BE PRESENT.

5. CHARGE REPLIED IT WOULD NOT BE APPROPRIATE FOR EMBASSY TO REQUEST INCLUSION IN SUPPOSED MEETING, AND IN ANY CASE FORMAL REPRESENTATION COULD NOT BE MADE WITHOUT INSTRUCTIONS. IN RESPONSE TO IGLEHEART'S QUESTION, CHARGE RECOMMENDED DIGNIFIED PRESS STATEMENT BY STANDARD (IGLEHEART SEEMED RELUCTANT SINCE THIS CHARGE CAME FROM "DIPLOMATIC SOURCE.").

6. WE HAVE NO REASON TO BELIEVE THAT PERE'S CHARGE IS MADE OUT OF ANYTHING BUT THIN AIR, AND HOPE DURING THE COURSE OF THE DAY TO BE ABLE TO REACH FACIO FOR LOW-KEY REQUEST FOR INFORMATION. WHILE WE DOUBT THAT THE GOCR WILL TAKE CHARGE SERIOUSLY, PERE STATEMENT COULD FURTHER MUDDY WATERS INsofar AS STANDARD IS CONCERNED, AND, OF COURSE, MIGHT SET OFF FURTHER IRRESPONSIBLE
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CHARGES, OR EVEN ACTIONS AGAINST THE COMPANY. CONCERNING PERE'S MOTIVES, DURING CALL ON CHARGE YESTERDAY BY UNITED CHAIRMAN ELI BLACK (SEPTel), WHO HAD JUST SEEN TORRIJOS, BLACK COMMENTED THAT HE FOUND TORRIJOS UNREALISTIC AND UNSOPHISTICATED ON THE BANANA TAX ISSUE, AND APPARENTLY OUT TO PROVE "HIS MACHISMO" IN THE AREA ON BANANA POLITICS.

ACTION REQUESTED: DEPARTMENT MAY WISH TO INSTRUCT
EMBASSY PANAMA TO APPROACH GOP SINCE CHARGE MADE BY
PANAMANIAN AMBASSADOR. ALSO SUGGEST DEPARTMENT APPROACH
TO STANDARD REPRESENTATIVE, WASHINGTON, TO
REINFORCE OUR SUGGESTION OF A PRESS DENIAL.
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Message Attributes

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